

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5798  
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 3001

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, SNAR, BM  
SUBJECT: RECENT INSURGENT ACTIVITY

1. ON AUGUST 16-17 GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED PRESS GAVE HEADLINE AND EDITORIAL TREATMENT TO RESULTS OF THREE BURMA ARMY (BA)-INITIATED OPERATIONS. IN THE NORTHEASTERN SHAN STATE, ABOUT 12 MILES NORTHEAST OF MONG MIT (APPROX 70 MILES WNW OF LASHIO), IN AN OPERATION AGAINST ELEMENTS OF THE BURMA COMMUNIST PARTY'S (BCP) 202 BN (WHICH HAS BEEN CONTINUING SINCE AT LEAST MID-JULY), THE BA ON AUGUST 4 KILLED ONE INSURGENT POLITICAL OFFICER WHILE SUFFERING 1 KIA AND 2 WIA. ON AUGUST 5 BA TROOPS KILLED 11 ETHNIC PALAUNG INSURGENTS NEAR NAMHSAN. TO THE SOUTH IN KAYAH STATE IN OPERATIONS AUGUST 3-11, BA KILLED 11 EHTNIC INSURGENTS WHILE TAKING 32 KARENNI INSURGENTS PRISONER AND 30 ETHNIC INSURGENTS SURRENDERED LATER.

2. THE GUB PROBABLY IS HIGHLIGHTING THESE SUCCESSES TO DISTRACT ATTENTION FROM REVERSES, WE HAVE HEARD, ITS FORCES HAVE RECENTLY SUFFERED IN THE NORTH. WE HAVE LEARNED FROM OTHER GUB SOURCES OF FIGHTING IN THE KACHIN STATE FROM JUNE TO AUGUST TO THE NORTHEAST OF MYITKYINA, THE STATE CAPITAL, IN WHICH A COMBINED BCP/KACHIN INDEPENDENCE ARMY (KIA) FORCE RECENTLY OVERRAN AT LEAST ONE GOVERNMENT OUTPOST KILLING SOME EIGHTY GUB TROOPS.  
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APPROXIMATELY A MONTH LATER, THE BURMA ARMY RECAPTURED THE LOST TERRITORY. WE HAVE INDEPENDENT FRAGMENTARY INFORMATION THAT INDICATES THAT IN EARLY JULY IN BCP/KAI INITIATED FIGHTING AT HTAWGAW NORTHEAST OF MYITKYINA, GUB FORCES HAD AT LEAST EIGHT SMALL OUTPOSTS OVERRUN WITH THE RESULTANT CAPTURE OF AT LEAST FORTY BURMA ARMY TROOPS.

3. ONE USUALLY WELL-INFORMED SOURCE TOLD EMBASSY OFFICERS THAT CONCERN WAS INCREASING AMONG BURMA ARMY OFFICERS AT THE COURSE OF THE WAR AGAINST THE INSURGENTS -- "800 CASUALTIES AND ABOUT 60 CAPTURED IN JUNE AND JULY IN THE NORTH AND ANOTHER 50-60 CASUALTIES IN THE NORTHEAST." HE SAID THAT AS A RESULT SOME OFFICERS HAVE BEEN OPENLY CRITICAL "IN THE MESS" OF PRESIDENT NE WIN FOR WHAT THEY CONSTRUE AS NEGLECT OF THE TROOPS AT THE FRONT. VOCAL CRITICISM OF THIS NATURE, HE SAID, IS VIRTUALLY UNPRECEDENTED AND MAY LEAD TO A PURGE OF THE CRITICS. (COMMENT: THE INFORMANT WAS DESCRIBING A CONVERSATION HE HAD HAD WITH AN ARMY FRIEND. HE PRESUMABLY WAS REFERRING TO THE ACTIVITY MENTIONED IN PARA 2 AND THERE MAY BE EXAGGERATION. WE HAVE HEARD OF SOME DISCONTENT WITHIN THE BURMA ARMY REGARDING ASPECTS OF THE WAR, BUT WE HAVE NOT HEARD A REPORT OF OPEN CRITICISM OF NE WIN IN MILITARY MESSES.)

4. IN OTHER ACTIVITY AGAINST INSURGENT GROUPS IN THE NORTHEAST, BURMA ARMY UNITS RECENTLY HAVE BEEN PROBING IN THE EASTERN SHAN STATE IN THE LAO LO CHAI BORDER AREA SEEKING EXILE TROOPS REPORTEDLY PRESENT THERE. ALSO, WE HAVE REPORTS THAT A 120- MULE SHAN UNITED ARMY/KIA OPIUM CARAVAN HAS BEEN BLOCKED BY GOVERNMENT TROOPS IN THE EASTERN SHAN STATE.

5. COMMENT: WE NOTE THAT EMPHASIS OF BCP-INITIATED MILITARY ACTIVITY HAS SHIFTED THIS MONSOON SEASON TO THE KACHIN STATE  
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BORDER. AT THE MOMENT, HOWEVER, WE DO NOT HAVE SUFFICIENT DATA TO COMPARE THE VOLUME OF THIS YEAR'S ACTIVITY -- BOTH GUB AND INSURGENT -- WITH THAT OF 1976 AND 1977 AND DRAW MORE THAN THE MOST TENTATIVE OF CONCLUSIONS. ON THE BASIS OF WHAT INFORMATION WE DO HAVE, HOWEVER, WE CONSTRUE A CONTINUATION OF THE BASIC PATTERN OF BCP MILITARY ACTIVITY IN AREAS NEAR THE CHINESE BORDER -- GUERRILLA ACTION PUNCTUATED BY OCCASIONAL LARGE UNIT ATTACKS ON SMALL, ISOLATED BURMA ARMY ELEMENTS. THE COMMUNISTS CLEARLY SEEK TO EXPAND THE AREA OF BCP INFLUENCE IN THE SHAN PLATEAU AND IN NORTHEASTERN KACHIN STATE AND THEY ARE TAXING THE GUB CONTAINMENT STRATEGY. THE DEGREE OF BCP ACTIVITY DURING THE MONSOON SEASON ONCE AGAIN MAY PRESAGE A RESURGENCE OF EFFORTS BY THE BCP WEST OF THE SALWEEN RIVER IN THE NORTHCOMING DRY SEASON.  
CORY

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